POEMS AND SONGS

Richard Middleton

POEMS AND SONGS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Prose

THE GHOST SHIP, AND OTHER STORIES

[*Third Impression*

THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY

Verse

POEMS AND SONGS (1ST SERIES)

[*Second Impression*

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POEMS AND SONGS

SECOND SERIES

By RICHARD MIDDLETON

WITH PREFACE

BY

HENRY SAVAGE

T. FISHER UNWIN

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NOTE

WITH the publication of this the second and last volume of Middleton's poetry and *The Day before Yesterday*, its companion volume in prose, it is as well to give a few facts in regard to the work still only in manuscript or unpublished in book form. Briefly, I have by me, his letters to others excepted, practically the whole of Middleton's literary output. There is enough material for a volume of essays and another of interesting miscellanea consisting of critical work, a fragment of autobiography, extracts from note-books, and a one-act play. A quantity of immature verse some editor of the future can deal with as he thinks fit.

Middleton's work is now beginning to receive the recognition it deserves. It will do no harm here and may do some good to state that during the last two years of his life several publishers refused to undertake the publication of his poems. There may be "no money in poetry," but the sooner we try to realise that poetry is worth more than money the better it will be for all.

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H. S.

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POEMS AND SONGS

PROLOGUE

For your delight I have no singing rose,
No sensuous musics stirred by love to riot;
Wonder is all that my dim spirit knows,
Wonder and strange disquiet.

A little question asked at dusk by one
Who gently hoped a meaning in it all,
And failing ever, strove to keep the sun
Upon the western wall.

I have not dreamed the magic of a kiss
To gild the judgment of the unshapen kings
On loveless themes who bade me hold that this,
This was the end of things.

A sombre world and grey, made sad with rain,
What is it worth, while in my sleep there sways
The crimson splendour of an unknown Spain,
The pageant of fair days.

Marjorie, Lily, Dorothy, and she
  Whom, sad and fair of all, I call Christine,
By all my gods, I know that they shall be
  Although they have not been.

Along the streets of death dim shadows move
  With these dear names to hide their misery;
But by my gods, it is not these I love,
  They know no word of me!

SUCH DREAMS AS I HAVE DREAMED . . .

Such dreams as I have dreamed, such flowers
As I have found upon my way,
May deck a poor man's holiday,
So take them, reader, make them yours.

They did not serve the dreamer, far
They called him through the moving foam,
Who might not leave his earth-bound home
For joy of his unhappy star.

So take them, emblems of a morn
That could not break, make them your own,
The dreamer walks the hills alone
Who died before his song was born.

THE BALLAD-MONGER

SUMMER and winter, wet and fine,
From early morn till night comes late,
I sell these tuneful wares of mine,
My stall's beside the city gate;
The dancing moments hear my cry,
"Brothers and sisters, will you buy?"

Roses and lilies blowing fair,
A sunny castle in old Spain,
A lock of my belovèd's hair,
A tale that shall be told again,
Joy and sorrow, heaven and hell,
These are all the wares I sell.

The citizens pass by my stall
Seeking a toy to soothe a child,
A ticket for to-morrow's ball,
A charm to make the weather mild;
They glance at me with careless eyes
That cannot see my merchandise.

But as the laughing winds go by
They steal my songs, the air above
Rings to their echoes, and the sky
Glows with the colours of my love;
And when the stars begin to shine
All heaven is merry with my wine.

The citizens may go their way,
Assuredly I shall not sorrow,
The song they cannot hear to-day
May teach them how to live to-morrow;
This is the pride they cannot kill
And Death shall find me singing still.

THE POET AND THE ROSES

"Go," I said to all the roses ;
"Go ! for I am tired of you.
I have bound you into posies,
Sung you under skies of blue,
Set you in my lady's tresses,
Loved you in my lady's bower ;
Now my weary heart confesses
It would like some other flower."

With the word my story closes,
For I died, and on that day
High they covered me with roses,
And I smelt them as I lay.

THE TIMID LOVER

I WAIT beneath the green grass where-through the children play,
In dreamy caves of darkness for the breaking of the day,
With the old joys quick about me and the new life certain now,
Waiting for the morning with her kiss upon my brow.

There she laid it gently where the grey hairs called me old,
And it seemed I thrilled to feel her kind lips kissing me so cold,
Just one kiss from her sweet mouth upon my forehead grey
And a hot tear beside it and then she went away.

What have I done in my life so well to gain me this
The quiet and the darkness and the sweetness of her kiss?

THE TIMID LOVER

What wrought I in my weakness so well to lay me here
To think upon her friendly face and her compassionate tear.

I lie beneath the green grass with my face toward the skies,
Waiting till the sunshine shall break into my eyes,
Waiting till the great winds shall fill my ears again
With music of the mountains and the castle walls of Spain.

Lying here a-dreaming with the song upon my lips,
Of the great sea of heaven and the shining stars like ships;
With the old joys quick about me and the new life certain now
I, who never dared to love her, with her kiss upon my brow!

TO A. C. M.

Thou art my dream, but for my last delight
Thou art transformed to sweetest shape of day,
And o'er the rosy hills and far away,
There pass the sombre fancies of my night,
With their sad lips and eyelids red with tears,
And their dominion of my barren years.

I am as one who goes to meet the dawn
After a night of sorrow, where she takes
The meadows with her silver feet, and wakes
The drowsy daisies on the dewy lawn;
Upon my forehead falls her healing kiss,
Night has her balm, but none so sweet as this.

Yet that dim spirit of imagined things
And love desired that filled the shadowy way
With wistful laughter of young fauns at play,
Gleam of quick feet and tumult of faint wings—
Has touched thy lips with sleep-wrought memories,
And set a star-lit wonder in thine eyes.

TO A. C. M.

So while I marvel still how fair thou art
With thy day-roses, there remains with me
The glory of the night's tranquillity,
Dream within dream, heart upon sleeping heart,
As though we wandered where the moon doth keep
Upon the frosty hills her silent sheep.

Thou hast been given the magic of all hours,
Day's joys, night's wonder, in thy little hands
Thou hast the gifts of all desirous lands;
What may I give thee then? these sunlit flowers,
These blossoms of the night to thee belong,
And thine is all the merit of my song.

THE MORNING AFTER

WHETHER I live, whether I die,
The pale day lightens in the sky;
Nor would dawn tarry on its way
Though underneath the grass I lay.
I am but I, when all is said,
Presently I shall be very dead.

Last night within the crimson bowl
Madly I sought to drown my soul.
I plucked the stars from out the rain
To light the darkness in my brain,
And flung a comet all awhirl
Into the bosom of a girl.

But, spite of all, here is to-day,
Though underneath the grass I lay.
Fate would not falter in her dance
Or check this foul continuance;
Night after day, day after night,
Lo, all my wine is wasted quite!

I AM NOT GOD, OR DEVIL, OR WHOLLY MAN . . .

I AM not god, or devil, or wholly man,
The fear that worships any light that seems,
And the high courage of a child in dreams,
Have swayed my fickle heart since I began.

For now I gathered roses one by one,
And now I sought grey heavens in the mire
That folds about our hearts, till my desire
Lay a dead thing and cold beneath the sun.

And suddenly Death seemed the final boon—
And suddenly I was no more than space
Having no faith or form or resting-place
To keep me dreaming twixt white noon and noon.

To give life for a dream, and then forego
The dream by living life, what's left, you fool?
No starlit estuaries or wakeful pool
To wash your heart more white than driven snow.

And yet there's this, not life or sleep or art
Has made, yet holding something of them all,
A dream caught up in some mad carnival
To conjure sunshine in a poet's heart.

TO CHRISTINE

All night before my eyes the ghostly throngs
Pass with the bitter savour of dead flowers
Crushed by dead feet, and on the sombre hours
Falls the sad sweetness of forgotten songs.
There is no glory in the dreaming sky,
For all night long the dead men wander by.

They are the men who made their love too brave
Till all life blossomed in one tender breath,
For these there is no charity in death,
Nor is there rest for lovers in the grave.
So very wearily they wander by,
Singing dear names in mournful harmony.

So shall it be with me when I am dead,
For I have found the ultimate delight
In your glad eyes, and I shall know no night
Though all the summer stars shine overhead.
Love is my life and so I shall not die,
But those who dream shall see me passing by.

A CHILD'S NIGHT SONG

NURSE has taken off my things
And the gas is burning low,
All the birds on sleepy wings
Went to bed some time ago.

So I stand beside my bed,
Sing my little hymn, and say
With a nodding sort of head
I've enjoyed myself to-day!

Laughed enough and played enough
In the garden and the street,
I can feel the carpet rough
Underneath my tired feet;

And the bed is smooth and white,
And my eyes are blinking fast
Good-night, Nursey, oh! good-night!
I am growing wings at last.

A CHILD'S NIGHT SONG

When the birds have taken wing
To the trees where they belong,
All the little children sing
Lullaby and evensong.

DRAKE'S SUNSET

"Come wind and tide," our Captain cried,
"Come angry ships enough,
My men shall prove to heaven above
Their hot resentful stuff,
The dons of Spain got home again
Shall cherish the rebuff."

Nor tide nor wind did us attend,
No angry ship did come,
We lay all day in fierce array
Drinking the golden rum,
But day or night, we could not fight
Because the world was dumb.

Till on a noon we saw the moon
Drive up the stars to war,
Galleons of light and ships of night
And privateers galore,
Years that have been, no man had seen
So many ships before.

DRAKE'S SUNSET

" Take wings, take wings," our Captain sings
" My gallant ship and fly,
Dead or alive 'tis ours to drive
These braggarts from the sky ! "
Our guns gave forth, and south and north
The heavens made reply.

The moon is sped and overhead
Her silver splendour gleams,
But in an hour she knew our power
And yielded to our dreams,
And all around, the breakers found
The wreckage of her beams.

" Now fight, now fight, ye hosts of night ! "
We cried with mocking lips,
But with bare spars the trembling stars
Drew off their wounded ships,
They had not dared an they had feared
Their admiral's eclipse.

Save one alone the stars were gone
In cowardly retreat,
The evening star came stately on
Alone of all the fleet,
She came so near that we could hear
The sailors' busy feet.

And then there fell the fires of hell
  And smote our ship with woe,
We fought above, and for their love
  The dead men fought below,
Borne on the flames Death called their names,
  They had no time to go.

But flaming red their blood was shed
  Upon the dying day,
And every cloud was like a shroud
  Wherein a dead man lay.
And red as blood streamed out the flood
  Of Santa Marta Bay.

When of a night, by firelight
  The children gather round,
When drowsy head is near to bed,
  And dreams are homeward bound,
This tale is told of Drake most bold
  Of all men above ground,

How not content with punishment
  Of Spanish dogs of war,
Whose broken ships and drownèd lips
  Have spread his courage far,
He did essay in Martha's Bay
  To fight the evening star.

HYLAS

A FAIR boy grieving in the spring
  Stayed the procession of the years,
For the sun grew pale at his sorrowing,
  And the moonlight filled his tears.
A rose lay dead upon his mouth,
  The violets dreamed about his eyes,
And a wind blew out of the mad South
  And tore the timid skies.

The sad rain fell upon his face
  That was as soft as a girl's breast,
His grief sought comfort in his grace,
  As a tired child its rest.
The warm wind sobbed about the earth,
  The heart of the pulsing earth was sore,
Because the boy had forgotten mirth
  And so would sing no more.

Ah, dear boy with the lovely head
  And the silver body of snow,
Laugh out again for the gods are dead,
  And the dead gods homeward go.

HYLAS

Ah, dear boy with the red lips
  And the breast as soft as a girl,
Young love has brought a thousand ships,
  And the stars are all awhirl.

TO L. R.

The triumphing day brings forth its dead,
I raise my proud undaunted head,
And hear beneath the laughing sky
The dreamy death-carts rattle by.
Across the world from south to north
The lights of heaven tremble forth,
And all across the world there weep
The poor blind beasts who may not sleep.

The poor blind souls may sob and shout,
But God has compassed them about
With many a cord and fine-drawn mesh
Of doubting earth and timid flesh.
I hear them call to Him and cry
To see His free and laughing sky,
Till with pale eyes and hands of red
The triumphing day brings forth its dead.

But I have seen the endless blue,
For love has cut my fetters through,
And I have seen the trembling stars,
For love has burst my prison bars.

TO L. R.

The dreamy death-carts rattle by,
I fear them not, for I am I,
Since down the star-enraptured street,
Love led me gently to your feet.

SONG FOR MUSIC

Hearts shall not be always aching,
Aching, breaking, for a lover,
Dawn the summer hills is taking,
Waking, waking, night is over.
Love-sick maidens end their weeping,
Sleeping, sleeping, in their bed ;
Through the window day is creeping,
Peeping, peeping, night is dead.

Now the saddest story closes,
Grief reposes till the morrow ;
Sleep has flung her sweetest posies,
Roses, roses, on their sorrow.
Every maid has ceased her sighing,
No more crying to God above ;
In her lover's arms a-lying,
Dying, dying, for her love.

NIGHT ON HUNGERFORD BRIDGE

Lights on the water, lights on the shore,
And the white stars in heaven.
Sang the sad river, "Lo! evermore
Forgotten, forgiven;
For the dead they have virtues fifty-score—
Their sins are but seven."

Lights on the water, lights on the tide,
And the white stars a-shiver.
"Here is your resting, here by my side
Forever, forever,
And they shall forget that you lived or died."
Thus sang the river.

Lights on the water, lights on the flow,
And the white stars above me.
"While life is smiling, sweet 'twere to go
Where death should prove me.
But what of the friends that I love so?
What if they love me?"

NIGHT ON HUNGERFORD BRIDGE

Lights on the water, lights on the tide,
And the white stars a-shiver.
"They might forget that I lived or died,
Truly, oh river!
But I should remember my place by their side
And sorrow for ever."

THE BOY POET

When midnight passes and the place is still,
As in a dream I see a boy who writes
With love beneath the stars, and seeks to fill,
With sensuous words the sombre winter nights;
And, oh, my heart is pale beneath the sky,
For in my dream I know it is not I!

He binds the tresses of young girls in rhyme,
And with his tender kisses steals their breath;
For he is lord of love and lord of time,
And by his youth he knows no word of death.
Starlight and lilies glow upon his lips,
And tender names and memories of ships.

I lay my tired head beneath his feet
And bid him trample down my misery;
But still he finds his wanton numbers sweet,
And through his world there blows no breath of me.
Upon his page my silver tears are cast—
He lingers with the roses of the past.

Ah, not for me his midnight ecstasies,
But fond regrets and unenchanted tears!
What though it be my lonely soul that cries
Across the barriers of the perished years!
I cannot hold him so, for while he sings
He hears the murmur of desirèd wings.

A MINORITY VOTE

I DREAMT I saw a city of fair skies
And fairer streets—a place of sweet desires,
Whose citizens had wide and joyous eyes
And hearts that yearned to heaven like tall spires;
And as they walked in loud and mirthful bands,
They sang, and clutched life to them with glad hands.

Fine were they, too, of form; about them strayed
Soft draperies through which their bodies shone
Silver and gold and rose; and youth or maid
Might see their bodies' beauty and love on;
And men and women, old without regret,
Dreaming of love fulfilled, were lovely yet.

And joy was there; in all the city's length
I saw no fingers trembling for the sword;
Nathless they doted on their bodies' strength,
That they might gentler be. Love was their lord,
For they had taken to their breast love's woes,
And all their sorrow was a fallen rose.

And then I woke. Ah ! God, that this should be !
This mournful place where through the hateful mud
Our children pass, whose hearts are for the sea,
And for a world of dreams their leaping blood ;
Their eyes are dim beneath the brooding stars,
Their hearts grow faint behind the prison bars.

And may I dream no more, lest when I wake
To see the banner of the dawn unfurled.
I hate our cunning for the children's sake,
And dread the rotting slime that is our world ;
So let us dream not, praise life with our breath,
And call our comfortable blindness faith !

WHERE ROSES DIE

If life be a garden, pluck me its roses,
That I may be weary of white and of red,
Of buds of fair promise, of flowers that are dead,
Or ever life closes.

For I have strung garlands of pain and of pleasure,
Their petals blush red where their thorns have drunk deep,
Since love has discovered the place where I keep
My roses, my treasure.

But all shall be faded and all shall be broken,
My hands shall be scarred from the wrath of the flowers,
Of all the fair tale of the passionate hours
No word shall be spoken.

Save whence came you, O Poet, and where are you going;
Have you pleasure for comrade and sorrow for wife,
Is your heart with the flowers in the garden of life
All a-blowing and growing?

WHERE ROSES DIE

Does it ache with the spring, with the autumn fall sighing,
Does it droop with the summer, for winter expire,
Does it weary of pleasure and pain, does it tire
Of living and dying?

Let it pass—for the lord of the garden is flinging
His flowers to dust, let your heart be as those,
Let it lie a forgotten, inanimate rose,
At rest from the singing.

When the castle of earth shall have right for its warden,
Your brothers shall whisper your name to the stars,
How you sang, how you fought, how you rode from the wars
To win peace in the garden.

NOW IN THE CALM OF EVE . . .

Now in the calm of eve
  When the glad sun has quaffed his cup and fled,
And the last sunbeams leave
  Faint wine-stains overhead.
Spilt from day's gleaming flagon, I rise up
  To glory at the banquet that is mine,
Oh my belovèd, is not the night our cup,
  Are not the stars our wine?

The lips of lovers win
  Joy from the feast of day, but oh the night
Drives all their cares away,
  And fills them with delight.
She is the friend of lovers, at her board
  They may drink deep of kisses without fear,
She gives them rapture keener than a sword,
  Joy like a sudden spear.

Night comes and I am glad
  That I was born a lover, she disbands
Her shadows, and my passions new made mad
  Riot in wanton lands.

NOW IN THE CALM OF EVE . . .

Between the roses and her starry sky
She weaves herself a silver veil of dew,
Her magic is upon us as we lie
And, oh ! I cannot breathe for kissing you !

PAN

A FAIR, slim boy, who darts across the brake,
  Paling the morning with his silver thigh,
  Piping his soft, strange music like a sigh,
To greet the world, and kiss the world awake,
And make its fond heart ache
  With vain regret and passionate melody.

A rumour of the far Hesperides
  Where dreams find rest across the magic deep,
  And all the dim enchantment that is sleep,
Breaks from his crimson lips ; the mournful trees
Rock motherly arms above his ecstasies,
  And weep such tears as grieving mothers weep.

For Pan must die, and in the forest wild
  We know the tender message that he had,
  And all the blushing beauty of the lad,
That thrilled the flowers to blossom when he smiled
  Not as a goat but as a lovely child
  We knew him in the forest, being mad.

And now his song must cease, and all about
The wonder-fields and clearings magical
His yearning numbers shall no longer fall,
The deep pools shall not echo his glad shout,
But darkness shall possess the world and doubt,
And there shall be no flowers here at all.

TO A. C. M.

If when the brown earth covers
The bones of happy lovers,
The tired body's ending
Proves but the soul's amending,
They have but little faith
Who are afraid of Death.

For all that we inherit
Is love; and if our spirit,
Glad from the grave and stronger,
Clings to our dust no longer,
We shall not grieve who treasure
Love, beyond human measure.

Though now we may not vanquish
The joys the dead relinquish,
And passion troubles ever
Our unachieved endeavour,
Sweet! be it ours to cherish
The love that shall not perish.

THERE BLOWS A WIND . . .

THERE blows a wind that has not blessed my face
Within a garden that I have not trod;
It lays new hope of untold years and grace
Of days to be upon the plants of God,
Though the sun comes not, they are unafraid,
Dreaming to-morrow's blossom in the shade.

Mine is to-day, I hold my treasure fast
Within my hand, while hours go singing by,
The summer love that is too sweet to last,
The rose that fades, the fear that will not die,
These are my all, while yet the pleasure stings,
Forth from my breast Love spreads his fleeting wings.

Within the ashes of my day I keep
My weary eyes upon the passionate star
Of happiness, and sometimes in my sleep
I make it mine, till striking from afar
Dawn turns my dream to dust, and I awake
Torn by my anguish for the moment's sake.

THERE BLOWS A WIND . . .

I hear the voices of the perished years
Crying : "We are no more who were your all,
Laugh with our laughter, sorrow with our tears,
Your heart lies dead with us beyond recall."
They pluck me with their hands, and I obey,
Lord of the moment, slave of yesterday.

Have pity now, oh stately years unborn,
And break your silence. Is there peace for me
Within the grave, or must I range forlorn
This sombre place of tears eternally ?
I sicken of the moment's bitter breath,
Is there no freedom in the gates of Death ?

The unborn years attend me not, and still
The past reproaches me, "You are the boy
Who saw life from a dream-enchanted hill
And plucked it like a flower, can any joy
Endure for ever ?" Still I dream and say,
Time was, Time shall be, there is no to-day.

THE LASS THAT LOVED A POET

WHATEVER shall I do ?
His rags affront me,
His wild words haunt me,
My heart is torn in two.

Where passion may not live
To love were duty ;
Unkissed by Beauty
Poor Beast can never thrive.

But oh ! what shall I do ?
His looks affright me,
His ways delight me,
My heart is torn in two.

Caliban ! Caliban !
To love I fear not,
To woo I dare not,
Was ever such a man ?

THE OLD MAID

All day long I sit by the window and wait,
While the spring winds fling their roses everywhere,
And I hear the voice of my husband cry at the gate,
And the feet of my children tremulous on the stair.

Hour by hour I dream at the window here,
While footsteps trip and falter a-down the street
And I hear my children murmuring, "Mother dear!"
And the voice of my husband crying, "Sweet, oh sweet!"

Though the world that was golden is wrapped in a cloak of grey
And a child is sobbing the tune of an old, old song,
I turn my eyes on the pride of the dying day
And I strain my heart to the hope of my whole life long.

So I sit by the window all day and dream and wait,
And thank the God who has planted his roses there—
For I hear the voice of my husband cry at the gate,
And the feet of my children tremulous on the stair.

LOVE'S ELOQUENCE

THOUGH all unskilled in love's imperious ways,
And though my lips may by no art express
My voiceless passion, yet my dreams confess
That I was born a lover; summer days
And starry nights have known my mute essays
To sound in words my amorous distress,
Begging the roses for their tenderness,
The summer birds for their glad roundelays.

But love, I shall not grieve though evermore
Silence should fold these eager lips of mine,
For in the stillness of my heart I hear
The breaking waves upon the unsheltered shore,
The dawn-wind in the solitary pine,
Crying through all the world, "He loves you,
dear!"

THE SECRET SONG

Dumb inarticulate fool!
With all my kingdom to sing,
My body new-made in the cool
Green alleys and ways of the spring,
And my soul like the face of a pool
That a touch sets eddying.

I who remember the song,
Hushed like a wind of the morn,
God sang in the grey night and long
Or ever my body was born.
Dumb! Oh my heart! was it wrong
That I heard—I His scorn!

Was it a sin that now
I must bear my burden apart,
The weight of His hand on my brow—
The pain of His song in my heart—
Sung in the darkness of how
Day shall break—Love shall start.

THE SECRET SONG

I know it the music of joy,
  Trumpet and cymbal and drum,
Born in the heart of a boy
  Or ever the knowledge had come,
That the God who had made would destroy.
  Oh my song! I am dumb.

UPON OUR BROWS NIGHT LAYS HER SWEET . . .

Upon our brows night lays her sweet
  Cool hand to drive the wisdom out,
With sound of little dreamy feet
  And secret rivulet's shout;
With broken words and sobbing tunes
  That though not youth's own roundelays,
Sing deeply of old suns and moons . . .
  Come sleep, speak of the old days!

True, we have earnt what we have earnt,
  A sober tread, a wider girth,
And grown so wise we too have learnt
  Our need—six feet of earth;
And we have ploys, God knows, enough
  To trip our feet up in the maze,
But joy was in the childish stuff,
  Come sleep, speak of the old days.

We know our duty is to talk
  Boys' hearts to hell, girls' faces wet,
With speech of Progress that shall walk
  Treelike—if God forget;

UPON OUR BROWS . . .

With scoffing of the base content
That only sought the starry ways,
Yet there was singing as they went,
Come sleep, speak of the old days.

For we are tired as may be
Old men and children born too wise,
We long for the old trustful sea,
The old compassionate skies;
The ancient tunes are our delight,
Though echo sings and folly plays . . .
To-morrow Progress, but to-night,
Come sleep, speak of the old days!

NEW WORDS TO AN OLD TUNE

This is a quiet place, but here again
I tread the passionate measure of last June
To that strange song, wind-wafted from the moon,
That fills the twilit galleries of Spain
With broken words and bitter-sweet refrain.
Oh heart, my heart! thou hast remembered soon
What kisses seek thy lips, thy hands what boon,
That tore the summer roses in disdain!

Not now shalt thou in those untroubled eyes
Discover thy lost youth, those lips that sing
And thrill in echo each most secret string
Of wonder, pity, love, shall not surprise
The lonely rhyme-child with their melodies,
Who now with wounded heart has taken wing
To that far country, whence the night-winds bring
Dim sounds of sweetness when the daylight dies.

DEATH'S BABY

Once long ago Death loved a mortal maid,
And she was pure, yet in no wise afraid,
She loved him so;
But strung flowers in his hair and called him King
Of laughter and of loving and the spring,
Once, long ago.
And it befell death had a little son,
So sweet a boy, that ere the day was done
The gods thought well,
Ere earth should blemish or the roses fade,
Death's son should die, and as the high gods bade
So it befell.
And that is why Death comes so tenderly,
And lifts the baby from the mother's knee
When it must die,
Kindly and softly lest it should awake,
And this he does for his dead baby's sake;
Yes, that is why.

MARGUERITE

THERE were shadows all around
  When I buried nice and neat,
Underneath the earthy ground
  My doll Marguerite.

I had my nightdress on, all white,
  There were no shoes upon my feet,
When I dug a hole at night
  For dead Marguerite.

It seemed to be more solemn so,
  I wrapped her in a little sheet
With her name that God might know,
  My doll Marguerite.

I kissed her face, but ah, poor soul!
  I could not hear her fond heart beat,
And then I dropped her in the hole,
  Poor, dead Marguerite.

And as I tiptoed back to bed,
(There were no shoes upon my feet.)
I saw the winking stars and said,
Goodbye, Marguerite.

NARCISSUS

My love lies hid in leafy forest pools
That never a wind may trouble from the south,
And there amid the silences he cools
His ivory body and his crimson mouth.

His white feet wander in a pebbled world,
His hands win petals from the hawthorn showers
And summer-long his golden locks are curled
About the silver bowls of water flowers.

Winter shall come and strip the shivering trees,
And all the forest shall be tempest tossed,
The pools shall waken from their summer ease
And in their quarrel shall my love be lost.

But summer shall restore his crimson mouth
To mine, and I shall see my love again,
His lips a little weary from the drouth,
His eyelids reddened by the winter pain.

NOCTURNE

When all the world is still
And stars the heaven keep,
A crystal goblet I shall fill
To pledge my lady sleep.
And if your lips will deign
To touch my goblet's rim,
Haply we two, made free from pain
Shall watch across the hills of Spain,
The summer stars grow dim.

Upon my heart, oh, love,
Win sleep the night-tide long;
The skies are weary-grey above;
Song greets the end of song;
The palace lamps burn low
That were as day before.
Lie close, oh heart, we shall not know,
We shall not weep or suffer so,
Who sleep and wake no more.

A LONDON NIGHT

Music and women's faces and a star,
Blank shadows, lights that thrill and cry and burn:
A railway engine screaming from afar
Its obligato for the world's nocturne;
Rubies and rags and children with bright eyes,
Girls with strange smiles and wonder of delight;
Death as a mummer under lime-lit skies—
Night!

Starved tragedies and ludicrous despairs,
Songs of drunk men and curses falling cold,
Bright shops of jewels, hissing naphtha flares,
Feathers and shirt-fronts, beads and cloth-of-gold;
Laughter and lust, dull hearts too tired for hate,
And passion triumphing in love's despite,
Reaping of sorrows: pleasures come too late—
Night!

Heads nodding, blinking eyes and mouths agape,
Men calling, women crowding from the plays;

A LONDON NIGHT

Two crimson lips that fold upon a grape,
Winkles and chocolates, lobster mayonnaise:
Cabs buoyant, black-browed 'buses passing down,
And homeless nothings slinking out of sight;
Shutters and sleep and silence on the town—
Night.

LOVE'S LOGIC

Ah, heart, be not afraid
  Nor blush nor tremble so
This is the love they made
  A thousand years ago.

Nor hide your pretty eyes
  If thus we love to-day,
They make it in this wise
  A thousand miles away.

Time, Space, can only prove
  The little change in men,
And how unchanging love,
  Love without end, Amen!

TO ALTHEA, WHO LOVES ME NOT

What sentries guard your gates, oh jealous heart,
What men-at-arms the ramparts of your pride?
Pleading can move you not, nor any art
Of words made eloquent, who late defied
The summons of your own hot blood to yield
To clamorous love, for still your walls within
Your passions stay controlled; on what fierce field
Will you match Fate at last, and lose and win?

Alas! that on that day I may not prove
The valour of my dreams, and flinging far
The splendid banner of triumphant love
Conquer the world and sate the gods with war;
Having no men-at-arms but these my songs,
That claim no skill in battle, I must wait
The coming of a king to whom belongs
The mastery in all things passionate.

When joyous in defeat you will lay bare
Your secret treasuries, and bid him take
Of all your jewels that which is most fair
To crown the victor stooping for your sake,

TO ALTHEA, WHO LOVES ME NOT

Accomplished love's own pauper, duly fired
By passion to win this knowledge on your breast:
That you, whom gods might covet when desired,
Are something less than human when possessed.

Think, Pride, before you hate me! Now I say
Your body's beauty unadorned by dreams
Of passion-cheated lovers, would not stay
My hunger for one hour; for yet there gleams
Deep in my heart a fairer form than this,
That I have given you a compassionate dole,
Lips that I would not, cheeks I cannot kiss,
The unattainable mistress of my soul.

If man but loved perfection, I would mark
Your ugliness—your mean, ignoble mind,
Greedy of common things, that in the dark
Feeds on itself contented to be blind
While men dare God for sight; and I should say,
"What's this she-thing to me, who can create
A thousand better puppets in a day,
Puppets with souls, better to love or hate!"

But you, unlovely and imperfect thing,
Beyond all reason empress of my love,
Change not at all, though even while I sing
Worlds die and are created, still you move

TO ALTHEA, WHO LOVES ME NOT

Sole mistress of your imperturbable hour
As though that hour held all; and I, who have
By right of song strange kingdoms in my power,
Leave all for this, the least thing that I crave.

Men die for dreams, proud creature, while you heap
About the blue-veined marble of your skin
Those lustrous tresses that the hands of sleep
Scarce dare to tangle. While you search within
Your polished glass for flattering news of all
You hold most dear, from out the hopeless fight
The souls of men seek forlorn burial,
And eyes that praised you range the eternal night.

And most we dream of love who on a day
Shall spread abroad his shapen wings and bless
Our hearts with news of heaven; though we pay
The price of your usurious wantonness
In murdered dreams and lives unjustified,
Still, still we seek him only, that at last
Our faith may make eternity our bride
And earthly tyrannies be overpast.

Comb those black locks of yours and watch your glass
And when all other pleasures fail you, pray!
Queen of an hour who with that hour shall pass,
Lo, all your hoarded beauty is decay;

TO ALTHEA, WHO LOVES ME NOT

For Death shall make your little cunning vain
And your insentient dust, too pure God wot
To be the mother of babes, shall come again
Back to the teeming earth that needs it not.

I can forgive your pride, the decent veil
That guards serene vacuity from shame ;
And that my passion's eloquence should fail
To move you, irks me not ; but that the name
Of love should be dishonoured in your guise,
That to this hateful and contaminate end
I should have brought my faith, my spirit cries
Pardon of love and makes this harsh amend.

Now hate me if you will, but well I know
The tale your matchless vanity will unfold :
"My dear, the poor mad poet loved me so,
He wrote sad things about me, better told
Perhaps, in prose, and best not told at all."
Ah, Pride, you triumph ever. If you will
Take this as my heart's offering, for withal,
Damn you, in some queer way I love you still !

THE UNDERSTUDY

Teach me how to kiss,
  Teach me how to sin,
  Teach me how to win
Better love than this.

Teach me how to sleep,
  If my love once more
  Hurts me as before,
So, I shall not weep.

Hate me if you will,
  Kill me with disdain;
  I am used to pain—
I shall be quite still.

No, I shall not stir,
  Kill me as I lie—
  When my love comes by
I shall smile at her.

THE UNDERSTUDY

In the silent hours,
  Ere she turns to go,
  Haply I shall know,
Sweeter lips than yours.

THE BALLAD-MONGER'S SONG

WHAT do you lack? Oh, what do you lack?
A meal for your belly, a coat for your back,
A coin for your pocket, a lass for your bed,
I will give you a handful of roses instead.

They have smiled on the sun and their thorns will
drink deep,
They were born of desire and perfected in sleep,
They have wept with the moon till they danced
in its beams,
And the buds of the stars were the roses of dreams.

Oh, you who are hungry and you who are cold,
I give you the song that will never be old,
Here's a rose for the beggar in delicate verse,
If he dies in the night it will do for the hearse.

What do you lack? Oh, what do you lack?
My wits went a-roaming and never came back,
Fair roses, dear gentles, I know it is true,
I'm a fool for my pains; I sell roses to you!

GUY FAWKES

Ah, pity me, mine is so short a breath,
That hardly may I feel the gentle air
And see the cool, grey earth that is so fair,
Before I droop beneath the hand of death.

The children gather round me in their play,
Their young hearts thrilling to their lips in song,
So sweet that, though it mocks me, yet I long
To hold my new-found beauty one more day.

A while ago they kissed me in their fun
And called me lovely. Ah, each childish kiss
Burned to my heart and said: "No more of this,
For death shall stop thee ere thou hast begun!"

For I am but a tale of long ago—
The brief remembrance of a brave man's shame,
Which is become a little childish game
That babies' feet can dance in, all a-glow.

And so I pass—But when the starry sea
  Breaks forth above my pyre, and folk are glad
  To see my short life finished, that I had
So brief a time for loving, pity me!

LOVE'S SANITY

I saw a madman playing with a stone ;
Alas, I thought, how easy, lacking wit,
To plan a marvel and accomplish it,
To dream a kingdom and achieve a throne.

Till suddenly the madman cried aloud
In mortal anguish : "See the yellow sun
That keeps my golden moments every one,
Is lost for ever, swallowed by a cloud ! "

I loved a girl and triumphed till I wept,
And that's the end of loving. Mad or sane
For every pleasure God will send a pain.
Night fell ; the lover and the madman slept.

SONG

What is a lover worth
Who may not win his flower?
I was born of earth
All in a sunless hour.
My father was a wind,
My mother a rose-tree,
But I was deaf and blind
Till love discovered me.

Last night I kissed her eyes,
Her hair, her little ears;
She praised me with soft cries,
Her tears were all my tears;
And all her body's red
Leapt to her cheek to see
The moon hang down her head
When love discovered me.

A CATECHISM

Why do they scourge your back with whips,
Magdalene, Magdalene?
Because God gave me crimson lips,
My pure sister.

Why do they tear your brow with thorns,
Magdalene, Magdalene?
Because God sent me weary morns,
My pure sister.

Why do they pierce your hands with nails,
Magdalene, Magdalene?
Because the love of God prevails,
My pure sister.

Why do they wound your silver feet,
Magdalene, Magdalene?
Because I found His image sweet,
My pure sister.

A CATECHISM

Why do they spear your snow-white side,
Magdalene, Magdalene?
All those who love are crucified,
My pure sister.

THE POET AND HIS DEAD

I've lit my tall white candles and placed them by the bed,
Two by her little dancing feet, two by her nodding head,
Ah, feet that dance not, eyes that see not, Love for ever dead!

I've picked my tall white lilies and lined them by her side,
In either hand a lily droops, a lily for my bride;
She cannot feel them, no nor see them, they watch her open-eyed.

And all the love God gave me to spend in knightly quests,
In pomp and pride of living, with her, with her it rests,
In her silent lips and quiet eyes and the stillness of her breasts.

The earth yet lingers with me, and yet I see the sky,
The winds are here, and the sun and moon and the stars that multiply;
And sometimes she is cold and dead and sometimes it is I.

Between us now there stretches a dim unmeasured space
The loving dead can bridge not or any loving grace,
I cannot see her breathing, she cannot see my face.

My poor hands touch and tremble, my poor lips kiss and yearn
For a little sudden warmth—but the dead shall not return,
The lilies droop and falter, the tall white candles burn.

And still I stand beside her, dreaming a lovely crime,
To heap her corpse with poems, to make her grave a rhyme,
One more song of our stricken love, with the grave-worms beating time.

Her arms that lay about me and never loosed their hold,
Her lips that in the darkness sought mine and made me bold,
Her hair that fell in my lap like a shower of gold—

Oh ! I could sing but I will not, she cannot hear,
The sound of my voice would fill the shadows with fear. . . .
I can't choose pretty words to bury you, my dear.

She was so beautiful, she is beautiful, with her face like snow ;
White wax whiter than the bees know
In the quiet room ; I killed all the bluebottles hours ago—

Dirty creatures——

THE BALLADE OF THE WEARY WRITER

WHEN I was young and of myself the king,
And all the world was fresh and green and gay,
I hunted Indians in the golden spring,
Till night threw shadows o'er my corpse-strewn way;
And, by my soul, I know it was not play
That led me captive on from hill to hill,
Laden with scalps and sword upraised to slay,
For in my heart I am a hunter still.

And haply summer's gentler days would bring
Surfeit of Indians and their quick dismay,
So gun in hand, I'd wait unwearying
To pepper tigers in my father's hay;
And elephants would trumpet through the may,
Stung by the ball that never failed to kill.
But, oh! the sadness of that joyous day—
For in my heart I am a hunter still.

But now my right hand harms not anything,
Indian and tiger long have passed away,
And wondrous mammoths, caught upon the wing,
Some other boy has made his lawful prey.
And golden days have changèd into grey,
And vengeful Time has handed in the bill,
Lo all the weary hours that I must pay,
For in my heart I am a hunter still!

ENVOI.

Time, I have wrestled with my stubborn clay,
And clenched my fingers on the loathsome quill,
But where the quarry, there my mind doth stray,
For, in my heart, I am a hunter still.

WHY THE KING LIKED MUSIC

Evilheart, the tyrant, hears
  When the world is fallen quiet
  After Nature's busy riot,
Words not fit for kingly ears.

Evilheart, with death to give
  To his subjects should they weep,
  When he lays him down to sleep,
When he rises up to live,

Sees the lips of silence part,
  Hears the silence calling still,
  "You were never quite so ill
As your actions, Evilheart."

Evilheart, the king, prefers
  To reproachful silence noise,
  Twenty thousand girls and boys
Playing on their dulcimers.

TO MARJORIE

Now may I vex my soul with no sad tears,
Though time has plucked love's golden plumes away
And he lies sorrowing in a darkened day,
Mourning the death of the delicious years.
Though now my veins are cold that throbbed with wine
Crushed from dark grapes of unassuaged delight,
Though on the gracious world that love made mine
The night has brought a darkness more than night.

Full well I know that love shall rise again
To cleave the world on new glad wings, and soon
We two shall lean, companions of the moon,
Forth from the starry battlements of Spain,
Your lips shall sleep on mine, your hair shall hold
My tired body in a silken net,
And love shall touch your kisses with his gold,
And fill your mouth with his fierce alphabet.

TO MARJORIE

So heart, I shall not mourn for fallen June,
The year swings round to some fresh night of joy.
Though in the broken halls of love, the Boy
Sobs for the pain of his forgotten tune;
He shall remember yet, and we who wait
Within the passionless shadows of the blind,
Shall hear across the mountains desolate
The voice of love borne on a summer wind.

SLAVE OF DREAMS

My life, my beautiful life all wasted,
The gold days, the blue days to darkness sunk,
The bread was here and I have not tasted,
The wine was here and I have not drunk.
All in a garden my mother bore me,
Roses and lilies my cradle round,
But I turned my eyes from the life before me,
I stopped my ears to all human sound.

For I remembered the song like thunder
Sung in heaven ere I was born,
While my myriad brothers lay fast in wonder
Patiently dreaming, till that fair morn
When in our dust the vital ember
Quickened to flame and we were as men
They have forgotten, but I remember,
The anger of God was upon me then.

I heard the song and I did not fear it,
Passing all mortal sorrow and mirth,
And still in my hour of life I hear it
Scorning the pitiful songs of earth.

SLAVE OF DREAMS

Now to my heart the children cry not,
Not on my ears are the great winds hurled,
I have heard one song of the songs that die not,
And I go my way in a silent world.

This is my sin, though dawn has riven
The eastern shadows and earth is fair,
I dream of the cool grey streets of heaven,
The deathless singers who wander there.
I do not heed them, my patient brothers
Who pray and wonder, who laugh and weep,
All in the garden that was my mother's
I tread the passionless paths of sleep.

THE LEGACY

If for some poet of hereafter
When I am dead and gone, I write,
What shall I give him of my laughter,
Of my forlorn and hopeless night?
Yet it might pleasure him, who knows?
That long ago I found a rose.

Always the twilit moments flicker,
I pass to Lethe as I rhyme;
But once my heart beat quicker, quicker,
Than beats the tireless pulse of Time.
I found my rose amongst the sheep,
Its thorns were death, and death is sleep.

I found my love in fields where wander
The crying sheep, and all I knew
Was that I had a world to squander,
And but one life to hurry through.
I crushed my heaven and was glad
Because her eyes had made me mad.

THE LEGACY

My rose, my love, my first sweet vision,
That is the last while I draw breath,
I value not the gods' derision,
Nor fear to break a lance with death;
Nor is there any joy in art
Since you wrote love upon my heart!

Day climbs upon the hills forsaken,
The sheep have lost their secret rose;
And well I know that I have taken
The world's love that the world knows;
And in the forest walk with Pan
For comrade, and am no more man.

Oh! distant poet, music-laden,
You hold to-morrow and its flowers,
But I have had a sweeter maiden
And I have known more precious hours.
Your song may bind the gods above—
But I have taught you how to love.

WHEN I AM BORN . . .

When I am born I shall not cry for love
To fill the tunnels of my heart with fire,
Only the intolerable sky above
Shall satisfy my weary heart's desire,
Though in the springtime every maid may scorn
Me, being loveless born.

When I am born no fear shall bid me weep,
Though unseen fingers touch me in the dark,
And dead things crawl along the ways of sleep,
And my poor flesh about my soul be stark.
I shall be lord of fear on that fair morn
When I am fearless born.

When I am born, there shall be no more God;
How shall I need Him, holding life at last,
It matters not where other men have trod
With other leaders, when the world is past,
And all the world looks forward to the corn
I sow, when I am born.

WHEN I AM BORN . . .

When I am born, there shall be no more death ;
I would not have my kingdom plucked from me,
And men shall laugh, drink, love, and draw new
breath,
Secure from a perplexed eternity.
Though in the dark lone ghosts may cry forlorn,
Ah woe, that he was born !

When I am born, no more, no more of song,
For on that day I shall not need to sing
To comfort me, because the way is long,
And weary is this timeful journeying.
The poet's last sad ballad shall be torn,
And I, I shall be born.

COMME CI, COMME ÇA

Betwixt love's gladdest hours the lover met
A man whose eyes were wet
With quenchless tears;
Nay, though the pitiful years
Whispered, "Forget! forget!"
He did not cease to weep.
"Surely she hears,
Though but a sorrowful wind across her sleep
To breathe my passion yet
In her unmindful ears."

And so he went his way,
Charged with his deep, unpardonable wrong;
The lover? Every dog must have his day,
The lover wrote this song.

THE FESTIVAL

Within those solemn walls whose arches bend
Over the sepulchres of England's dead—
Heroes turned dreamers in a tranquil land,
To-day the great who linger yet attend
To set a golden crown upon his head,
To place a jewelled sceptre in his hand.

And so, with stately ceremonial pomp,
The King is crowned; but do we dream who find
Within his realm a kinglier pageant still—
Some tattered urchin pausing in his romp
To loose a farthing banner on the wind
And cry "God Save the King!" with all his will?

So when to-night your triumphing bonfires burn
High on the hills, and by your lips outsung
Your eloquent homage to the stars is hurled,
Still to his faithful poor our eyes shall turn,
Before whose homes their loyal hands have hung
A little lamp to illumine all the world!

QUEEN MELANIE AND THE WOOD-BOY

THEN summer came and the long hours began
To limp like weary pilgrims, to what shrine
My dead mind could not know, but through my fan
I saw the sun sink flushed in seas of wine
To rise from pools of amber, and the moon
Dragged through the stars her swollen, twisted face
That filled the land with shadows, while the tune
Of mournful insects lulled the breathless place.

Throned on my silken cushions night and day
I held my wakeful court, the breezes slept
Save that pale maidens fanned me as I lay,
Beating the warm air while their bright eyes wept
Great silent tears for their long weariness ;
From all the palace rose no human cry
Or sound of laughter, languor measureless
Troubled the earth beneath the brooding sky.

Till in the third week, while my mind yet strove
To think no more, forgotten of all joy,
The huntsmen found in some dim forest grove,
Caught in their traps, a little naked boy,
Who seemed a child of Pan, forsaken young
And reared by savage creatures for their King,
For in his stress he cried an unknown tongue,
And being succoured fought like a wild thing.

They led him to the court, his wide eyes turned
From wall to wall and found no sylvan ease,
Only fierce tapestries, where the sunlight burned
The ruddy breasts of nymphs, and emerald trees
Stood stark against blue skies. The friendly birds
Had all forsaken him ; but on my ears
There fell his sweet, uncomprehended words,
Filled with the piteous eloquence of his tears.

Ah ! were that tongue unknown that nightly charms
My cruel dreams, I should not stretch in vain
Across the world my unassuagèd arms,
That crave so light a burden ; not again
Should I awake at dawn and grieve for him,
Slipped forth between my heart's most jealous bars,
The child who all night long in meadows dim
Peeps through my fingers babewise at the stars.

So when I heard the wood-boy's bitterness,
Breathed in the court that shimmering afternoon,
Only too well I read the keen distress
In his blurred syllables—God has hung his moon
Too high for babes and women, so we weep—
I held my arms across the glittering floor,
And he leapt lightly in and lay asleep . . .
I was as rich as any of my poor!

I held him to my heart, no more made sad
By the impalpable triumphs of my dreams,
The child that I could touch, the forest lad
With smooth young limbs that from a hundred streams
Had stolen their white splendour; now his breath
Fell on the air and set the motes adance
With passionate scent of flowers, that in their death
Had charged him with this sweet inheritance.

Now with cool hands he touched my burning cheek,
Now from his sleep he called me with soft cries,
My little child in all the world so weak,
So strong in heaven! Through his drooping eyes
I saw the wonder of the untrodden woods,
When roused by night the savage creatures hear
Pan piping to his moonlit solitudes,
And all the forest stays its breath for fear.

I saw the seasons; spring in the windy eaves
  Calling the birds to song and summer's pride.
Now autumn flung largesse of golden leaves
  For beggared earth to clutch, the autumn died
And winter lit the leafless woods with frost
  And every shivering twig bediamonded,
But best I loved the spring, when brown earth tossed
  Exultant in labour, on her starry bed.

Mother to mother—for he who lay at rest
  Were surely mine in any life but this,
Did not his fingers play upon my breast—
  Did not my bosom rise and fall with his
As though we shared our breath! My little rose
  Clung to my heart, till weary of delight
The long day faltered to its crimson close,
  And down the silent galleries crept night . . .

IN EXILE

SINCE we must live our lives apart,
How shall it comfort my sad heart
That is too mindful of her kiss,
To cry, "O God, how fair she is."

Better it were to call her dead
Than to remember her sweet head,
Patient beneath my rebel hands,
That would unravel the dark strands
To crown her with a cloud, and know
That other fingers use her so.

Better it were I had not found
The shining eyes with lashes round
That laugh across my dreams, to feel
That other dreams their brightness steal.

Better it were I had not pressed
The dear resistance of her breast
Against my heart, that Time should dare
Another heart to wanton there.

And since we live our lives apart
Why dost thou cry, my foolish heart,
Knowing there is no world but this,
"God in heaven, how fair she is!"

MAD MAID'S SONG

"You amorous birds that dare the night
And in her bosom hover,
Tell a poor maid who knew delight
Where is the moon, my lover?"

"Last night within his passionate arms
It was his will to take me.
Truly I have no store of charms
If now he doth forsake me."

"Tell me, sweet birds, that haunt the glade,
Can Love so soon be over?"
"So soon, so soon, Alas! poor maid,
That had the moon for lover!"

I LOOKED UPON THE FACE OF PAIN . . .

I LOOKED upon the face of Pain
Until I found her charmings vain,
Her drooping mouth, her dewy eyes,
Her strange insistent melodies,
Her subtle feet that dance with death,
Her sinuous hands that muffle breath,
Her pallid breasts, her lackless hair;
I saw and found no sweetness there.

"Now in the days to come," I said,
"Fate's hand shall pass me as one dead,
For I have learned all misery,
And in my life there cannot be
Or torturing rains or tedious suns
Or riotous companions
'Twixt life and death, 'twixt love and hate—
Surely I have outwitted fate."

Beneath some grey unbroken sky
The days might blossom quietly,
Wither and pass in empty nights
Undarkened by God's twittering lights.

And I might always dream, nor feel
The roughness of the human wheel
That stops and starts and blunders on
The high road to oblivion.

I cannot, though my mind may crave,
While yet my body has no grave,
A twilit peace accomplish this;
And though Pain had all bitterness
Long since, yet crave I for her grace,
The ancient beauty of her face,
While wearily I tread my measure
Beneath the silken whip of Pleasure.

THE LAST REMONSTRANCE

Upon my mind, oh love, upon my heart
Fate's whim has traced your name, and to my eye
Life is a curtain changing curiously
Before a fitful wind; and grief and fear
Cry out, "Oh, man, make ready to depart,
For all the seasons change," but you are here.

And so I linger still, though I am tired
Of this dull body that may dance no more;
The little children leap as once before
In some young place I leapt to see the blue.
Love was not of the treasure I desired,
And yet I linger here because of you.

How should this be? If you had kissed my face
Gladly with your new lips, if in your eyes
There were revealed my childish memories
Of holy things, should I have waited thus,
In this unlovely and detested place,
Where I am mean and beauty perilous?

THE LAST REMONSTRANCE

For now you keep me with a careless smile
And mocking eyes, and words that thrill to naught;
And you will have no traffic with my thought,
No pleasure in my love, though I have seen
Youth in the forest dance a little while,
And found the swooning flowers where love has been.

Why is your face so fair that it can hold
With its fair-seeming all there is of me?
For I was lord of farthest Arcady,
And in the days of wonder I would heap
The heavy-lidded moments with my gold
Of dreams and with my silver chains of sleep.

I am a pauper now. I have no pearls
Plucked from the sullen sea, or purple ships
From dim Cathay, or maids with crimson lips
Nodding on tapestries; about my bed
There shine no summer stars; my singing-girls
Have lost their harps and all their songs are fled.

The seasons change and pass, and yet I stay,
Moodless as one who in an idle swoon
Plays god to wooden puppets for a moon
Upon a wooden throne; my hands are set
To wanton tasks to fill the weary day,
I may not win, or suffer, or forget.

THE LAST REMONSTRANCE

And this is all, and this: I may not tell
What love may be, or where your planet gleams,
Light the cold beacon of my perished dreams
To fill the world with old desires, and start
The joy that was ere yet your shadow fell
Upon my life, oh love, upon my heart!

TO DIANA

You keep your court on lonely heights, where still
Glowing between the evening and the day
Your palace fills the shadows with dismay,
And drives the stars from your bewitchèd hill.
Your loosen'd hair about the earth is curled,
Your bosoms are the mountains of the world.

And so I find you in dark woods austere;
The trees have won your voice, your plaintive eyes
Lurk in dim pools that never knew the skies,
And touch the trembling water-flowers with fear.
And well I know, in many a sunny place,
The fields have guessed the secret of your face.

I love the world—the world is all my love;
Laughter and pain and hope that lasts a moon
Have set my life to a familiar tune,
That I may serve my lady's court above;
Where, 'twixt the twilight and the evening's glow,
Your breasts have crowned the mountain-tops with snow.

LOVE AND THE SEA[1]

I KNOW no song as sad as this that fills
  The mournful barriers of the desirous sea
  With weary echoes, and discovers me
Even in the secret hollows of the hills,
Where sea-birds stoop to skim the sombre mills,
    And lips that triumphed once in ecstasy
    Are harsh with salt, and by the uprooted tree
Pan lays the pipe that no spring music thrills.

From tide to tide the burden runs apace
  And fills the grieving world, "As love has been
    So love shall be from heaven unto hell;"
And to the stars I turn a sorry face,
  For I have thought to love, and I have seen
    A dreaming child find music in a shell.

[1] In the last two lines of this sonnet there is an unmistakable echo from Wordsworth's "Excursion." But I was innocent enough when I wrote it, and so I let it go.—R. M.

SONG FROM QUEEN MELANIE

Some find their love in the deep woods
  Betwixt the green and brown,
And some on the crests of far hills
  Where the red sun goes down ;
I am content with her I won
  In the streets of a grey town.

Her skin was like the buttercup
  That shines upon the lawn,
Her cheek was like the lily-flower
  And the first rose of dawn,
Her mother was a forest-nymph,
  Her father was a faun.

And that is why in the long streets
  With the cold folk around,
The great peace of the far hills
  Within her heart I found,
Laughing rivers and trees that sang
With a pleasant leafy sound.

SONG FROM QUEEN MELANIE

There was a wonder in her face
  That told of that dim June,
When deep in an enchanted glade
  Beneath a laughing moon,
Her father and her mother sang
  Love to a pagan tune.

Her eyes were as two lights of God
  Drowned in a brimming pool,
And all the winds of all the world
  Had washed her body cool,
Her lips were like a flower of love
  Not yet made sorrowful.

The black smoke stabbed the face of heaven
  And left a thousand scars,
The shadows of the houses fell
  Across the sky like bars,
But I shut my eyes and cried aloud
  For the brightness of the stars.

For in a love-bewitchèd wood
  We wandered far it seemed,
And through the branches overhead
  A thousand planets gleamed,
While earth pursued its mournful path
  And knew not that it dreamed.

SONG FROM QUEEN MELANIE

Until in some dim glade we stood
  Upon an emerald lawn,
Swathed in the purple mists of night,
  Expectant of the dawn ;
And lo ! she was a startled nymph,
  And I an eager faun !

MAD HARRY'S VISION

THE silver girl she came to me when Spring was dancing green,
She said, "I've come to wait on you and make your cabin clean,
To wash your face and hands and feet, and keep your forehead cool,
And I'll get you into heaven yet, you damned old fool!"

She combed my hair until it shone like water in the sun,
And when her fingers touched my head it seemed that pain was done,
For all my black and oblong thoughts went crying to the wilds,
And all my thoughts grew round and white like any little child's.

She washed my ears, and I could hear her voice about the place,
She washed my eyes, and I could see the sweetness of her face,
She washed my mouth, that I might pray, and in the dark I prayed
That I might kiss the sweetest lips that ever God had made.

The silver girl she frowned on me, and said, "Oh, thing of ill!
Was it for this I cleansed your mouth that would be sinning still?
Was it for this I gave you sight and taught you how to hear?
Better the mud remained to screen your evil heart, I fear."

"Oh, silver girl! oh, silver girl! have pity now," I cried,
"Long years I knew my mother earth and knew no thing beside,
Now you have called me from my peace to kill me with disdain,
Give me a kiss, or let me be Mad Harry yet again.

I cannot hear your blessed hymn, because your body cries
A louder, sweeter song, that takes my spirit by surprise ;
Sin should not wear so fine a dress, and I would have you know
It is not fair of God to tempt a poor old sinner so."

The silver girl thought east and west, she wondered north and south,
And there was laughter in her eyes and in her lovely mouth ;
She stood a-plucking at her dress and nodding of her head,
"It seems to me I've taught this damned old fool too much," she said.

"When you were in your mother mud you did not dream of this,
Until I gave you back your sight you did not want to kiss,
The sin is mine, come take your kiss, to-morrow you shall be
All that you were before I came and sought to set you free."

She kissed my face and lit the world, and burned
away my blood,
And now I lie and dream all day, Mad Harry in
the mud,
But with my black and oblong thoughts one white,
round thought I keep,
The vision of the silver girl, who kissed my soul
asleep!

TOO LONG THIS VAIN ENDEAVOUR . . .

Too long this vain endeavour
Desire's bonds to sever;
Oh loose your charms into my arms
And finish me for ever!

Your blood now flees, now rallies,
Now leads adventurous sallies,
Its rhythm fills your shapely hills
And moves your secret valleys.

Oh, sweet to be so near you,
To see you and to hear you,
To open wide the gates of pride
And never more to fear you.

WHEN DAY'S DONE AND NIGHT'S DONE . . .

When day's done and night's done and dream-time is over,
Shall we wait and listen in some quiet place apart;
You my ghostly love and I your spirit lover,
Listen to the beating of the world's great heart?

What shall it tell us, the tale our lives have broken?—
Love of gods and dreams of gods, in the world beyond the blue;
Or stories that we know, old words our hearts have spoken,
The glad songs, the sad songs, that I have shared with you?

'Neath the tears of night the tired earth recovers,
Spent with the anguish and passion of the sun,
Earth has no secrets, no secrets from her lovers,
Their ways are her ways, and all hearts are one.

WHEN DAY'S DONE AND NIGHT'S DONE

I cannot live, I cannot live without you,
  Nor these my pains, nor these my pains endure,
And yet to die, belovèd were to flout you—
  Take me! break me! and trouble me no more.

OCTOBER 28, 1910[1]

On this fine autumn day, a bee
Forth from his comrades' lethargy
Has flown, and now morosely hums
Among the dead chrysanthemums.

Even so when I woke from sleep
And forth into the world did creep,
Although the sun shone overhead
I found the flowers of life all dead.

Presently, when the day shall die,
Homeward the cheated bee will fly;
I too whom wintry suns beguile,
I shall find rest in a little while.

[1] My twenty-eighth birthday.

PAIN

THERE is a blunder somewhere in my mind
That Fate has found, and lo, the earth grows small.
In truth I am not deaf, or dumb, or blind,
But something of them all.
God dances like a gnat across my brain,
But like a worm within a worm creeps pain.

Would I could pluck it forth and make it creep
Across the page, an ugly shape of fear,
And stab it with my pen to sudden sleep,
And you should see it here,
Crimson, I think, and fat and hinting power,
And lord of dust, hour after hateful hour.

Ah, lord of more than dust, yea lord of all,
Far down dim corridors my spirit flees
In craven fear, the earth is grown too small
To breed such flowers as these ;
Yet nothing snaps within my faulty brain
When like a worm within a worm creeps pain.

WE ARE TOO OLD . . .

We are too old, we are not wanted here,
Where the young people play;
Soon from our eyes some quick, compassionate tear
Shall roll the world away;
My heart and I, perhaps we had our day—
We are not wanted here.

We linger yet, slaves of an old desire,
Bound by the primal lust;
The purchased kisses burn our lips with fire,
Contempt and harsh mistrust
Are ours who keep our sorrow in the dust,
Slaves of an old desire.

Be brave, oh heart! The night comes dreaming on
When we shall grieve no more,
Life is a plant that blossoms and is gone;
The flower dies before;
Though love depart and lovers' eyes grow sore,
The night comes dreaming on.

THE POET'S MISTRESS

Because he wearied me with words
By day and night, and would not cease
His love's complaint, or give me peace
To dream and listen to my birds ;

I let the lover have his will,
In truth it was not much to give
To keep a foolish youth alive
It was not in my mind to kill.

He never gave me any joy,
I never sought his love or him,
I only yielded to his whim
Because I would not hurt the boy.

But now his love is dead, it seems,
Slain by my too compassionate kiss,
And night and day he tells me this
And I am parted from my dreams.

Lovers must come to earth at last,
  But why should I be troubled then?
  Dear God! what shall we do with men?
My birds are dumb this fortnight past!

THE DEAD SINGER

I SANG my song long years ago,
And you who read this line
Shall likely capture braver words
And better songs than mine,
But here's a link, when all is said,
Between the living and the dead.

Know this, that for the dead who sings
The living world away,
One half the world was blackest night,
One half was fairest day;
But night and day he sang his song,
And did not find the waiting long.

You breathe the air, and see the world
As once I saw it too,
Earth spreads for you her gladdest flowers,
The skies their deepest blue—
Brother! yet something must be wrong
That you should read a dead man's song!

THE DEAD SINGER

Gather the bravest words you can,
  And choose the sweetest tune,
And make a song of God and man,
  Of sun and stars and moon;
    And ere its echoes shall be sped,
    You shall take comfort, being dead.

THE DARKNESS IS UPON ME . . .

The darkness is upon me, the grey shadows fill
The fading garden of the world and make my eyelids smart,
Oh, all the years that I have lived I would be living still,
For all the songs that I have heard are crying in my heart.

"Awake, awake, oh dreamer, awake and greet the day,
The girls are in the garden, their feet are wet with dew;
And they shall fashion garlands to charm the night away,
And all shall be glad again, as once it was with you."

THE DARKNESS IS UPON ME . . .

The darkness is upon me, the grey shadows kill
The little courage of my soul, too ready to depart,
But all the girls that I have loved I would be loving still,
For all the songs that I have sung are crying in my heart.

WINTER LOVE

Though all the hills are loud with springtide mirth,
And laughter follows fast,
In some forgotten kingdom of the earth
Sad lovers meet at last.

Even as you and I with hearts to hide,
Where love was wont to live;
You with the little remnants of your pride,
And I but dreams to give,

Met—and though you were bitter with the years,
And I was worn and sad,
Yet you took pleasure in my kindred tears,
Your sorrow made me glad.

Now from his wind-swept palace love departs,
And these are winter days;
Still in the roofless chambers of our hearts
This consolation stays.

So let us seek some place, whate'er betide,
Secure from summer's beams,
Where I may guard the remnants of your pride,
And you may keep my dreams.

BRUSSELS, *March* 2, 1911.

HEYST-SUR-MER

Under the arch of summer
The great black ships go by,
The sun is like a bead of blood
Upon the wounded sky,
The girls are dancing, dancing,
And night falls tenderly.

Would I were on a great ship
With the wind upon my face,
And the water's music in my ears,
And the rigging's song of grace,
Would I were on a great ship
Bound to a new place.

Where trees are and flowers are
And breakers on the shore,
Where a child might find all the dreams
That he had known before,
Where I should be at peace at last
And the girls would dance no more.

HEYST-SUR-MER

Under the arch of summer
The great black ships go by,
There is a madness in the wind,
A wonder in the sky,
And the girls are dancing, dancing . . .
No peace, no peace have I.

August, 1911.

THE JOURNEY

I was born a traveller, wearily pursuing
The trail of the morning while the years slid past ;
Whether leads the road to my peace or my undoing,
It's a long, long road, but it brings me there at last.

When my feet were young and hope was aye beguiling
The road with speech of cities and wondrous shapes of men,
Easy it was to bear my burden smiling,
Oh, it was easy to tread my measure then!

Love was my comrade, his wings were quick to raise me,
Were the road rugged, he bore me on his breast ;
All night long the stars conspired to praise me,
Man among men, I had no need of rest.

THE JOURNEY

Now I grow weary, no more across the meadows
Glad of sun and song the wind exultant blows ;
Night is my comrade, and all my thoughts are shadows,
Still I take my way where the white road goes.

Not without love, while in some secret hollow
From all my youth one flower stands brave and fast ;
Not without hope, for though the road I follow
Is a long, long road, it shall bring me home at last.

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